

Message Text

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PAGE 01 COTONO 00490 101434Z

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PC-01 L-03 /013 W
-----110035Z 106252 /66

R 101330Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9484

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0490

ALSO PASS PEACE CORPS WASHINGTON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, DM, US

SUBJ: HARASSMENT OF PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER BY BENINESE OFFICIAL

REF: STATE 049148

THERE FOLLOWS DETAILS REQUESTED PARA 6 REFTEL:

1. PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEER (PCV) DEBORAH OWENS, WHO HAD BEEN SERVING SINCE DECEMBER 1976 IN APLAHOUE VILLAGE AS PRIMARY HEALTH EDUCATOR, FOUND HERSELF IN DIFFICULT POSITION OF WORKING FOR A "CHEF DE DISTRICT" WHO WAS SEXUALLY INTERESTED IN HER. AS LONG AS SHE HAD FREEDOM TO CIRCULATE SHE SUCCEEDED IN DISCOURAGING HIS ATTENTIONS OR PHYSICALLY AVOIDING HIM. FOLLOWING EVENTS OF JANUARY 16, 1977, WHEN ALL FOREIGN NATIONAL VOLUNTEERS WERE CONFINED TO THEIR TOWNS, HOWEVER SHE WAS UNABLE TO DO HER JOB OR FUNCTION NORMALLY WITHOUT SEEING DISTRICT CHIEF SINCE ONLY HIS AUTHORIZATION WOULD PERMIT HER TO CASH CHECKS, SHOP IN NEIGHBORING TOWNS, OR DEPART FROM HER SITE. AS ALL HER MAIL WAS BEING CENSORED AND ALL HER TELEGRAMS TO PEACE CORPS COTONOU WERE NEVER FORWARDED, PCV WAS ENTIRELY AT MERCY OF DISTRICT CHIEF WHO REFUSED HER PERMISSION ON MANY OCCASIONS.

2. IN FIFTH WEEK AFTER JANUARY 16, AFTER SITUATION BECAME
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PRESSING (PCV WAS BORROWING MONEY FROM BENINESE LANDLORD AND HAD BEEN FORCED TO SUBSIST ON SUGAR CUBES FOR TWO DAYS), DISTRICT CHIEF RELENTED, ALLOWING PCV TO TRAVEL TO BANK/SHOPS IN NEARBY LOKOSSA. UPON RETURNING TO SITE MS. OWENS WAS FURTHER REFUSED WORK OR TRAVEL.

3. ON FEBRUARY 27, 1977 AT 2000 HRS, DISTRICT CHIEF VISITED

HER, WAKING HER FROM BED. MS. OWENS RESPONDED TO CALL AS SHE THOUGHT DISTRICT CHIEF HAD COME TO GIVE OFT-REQUESTED TRAVEL PERMIT. INSTEAD HE (WHO HAD BEEN DRINKING ALL DAY) ATTEMPTED TO FORCE HER TO SLEEP WITH HIM, DISTRICT CHIEF SEIZED HER ARMS, FONDLED AND KISSED HER, ETC., UNTIL HER STATE OF SHEER TERROR AND NEAR COLLAPSE PERSUADED HIM TO DESIST. MS OWENS WAS WARNED BY DISTRICT CHIEF NOT TO REVEAL INCIDENT TO ANYONE OR SUFFER SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. THE NEXT DAY MS. OWENS OBTAINED TRAVEL PERMIT AND WENT TO NEIGHBORING TOWN OF DOGBO WHERE SHE WAS MET BY PEACE CORPS EDUCATION DIRECTOR WHO HAD BEEN SENT TO CHECK ON HER WELLBEING DUE TO LACK OF COMMUNICATION FROM HER. MS. OWENS RETURNED TO COTONOU SAME DAY AND REMAINS HERE AWAITING TRANSFER TO ANOTHER COUNTRY.

3. AT REQUEST OF MIN OF EDUCATION ACTING PEACE CORPS DIRECTOR (APCD) FORWARDED DETAILS OF INCIDENT TO MINISTER HIMSELF. (MINED IS STRONGEST ALLY OF PEACE CORPS/BENIN TO DATE.) MINED, BEING MEMBER OF COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, HAS AUTHORITY TO PRESENT CASE BEFORE COUNCIL. POSSIBILITY EXISTS THAT GOVERNMENT OF PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BENIN (GRPB) ACTION MAY BE TAKEN AGAINST DISTRICT CHIEF SINCE REGIME PROCLAIMS ITSELF VERY CONCERNED ABOUT MORALS AND ABUSES OF POWER BY LOCAL OFFICIALS. SHOULD MINED FAIL TO INITIATE ANY ACTION, PC/B PROPOSES LODGE COMPLAINT VIA EMBASSY TO MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL HARASSMENT, TRAVEL CONTROLS, PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 10-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770374/aaaacnjl.tel
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Litigation History:
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